

Federal Women's Program woman, supervisor of year named

by Rachel Newton

The Pine Bluff Arsenal Federal Women's Program named Pat Hopkins, its Woman of the Year, and Debbie Johnson, its Supervisor of the Year, at the Women's Equality Day program Aug. 25.

"I was totally shocked," said Hopkins, a property disposal specialist with the Directorate of Public Works, Waste Management and Reclamation Division, who has worked for the Arsenal for 23 years. "I didn't have any idea. It was nice to be thought of."

Division Chief C.D. Huggins, who has worked with Hopkins for many years, said that the guys in the division all feel that she is very deserving. "We feel like they finally got it right," he laughed. "One of the operators said that he thought that the plaque should have said 'Lady of the Year' instead of 'Woman of the Year' because that is the way we think of her."

"We are all very close down here," said Hopkins of the area she works in. "So many times I have worked as the only female here. I have worked with four people and as many as 100 too. The 15 employees we have now I have seen grow up. I have seen their kids grow up and have seen their kids have kids."

Hopkins has worked in the same place those 23 years. "When I started there were four operators, two truck drivers and an office chief," she said. "The guys who I work with now have been here with me about 18 to 20 years. I have been with them a long time."

Some of the highlights of Hopkins' nomination included her pursuit of training and self-development courses as well as self-improvement. She recently applied for and received a scholarship offered by the National Federally Employed Women office which covered her entire expenses to attend the National FEW Training Program in Reno, Nev.

"It was so great to be able to attend this program," she said. "The two main speakers we had were the best we have ever had at the national program. The training was very good. I think each year they change but they do get better."

As a leader of FEW, Hopkins has served as treasurer, secretary and first and second vice president. She has also served as the chair of special projects.

Hopkins has also constantly encouraged women to take the challenge in getting ahead in their careers. "She has encouraged women to become active in the special emphasis programs," read the nomination information. "She has accepted many leadership roles in FEW....serving as an example for other women to show them how this can benefit them in the future. She is very congenial, well-liked and a team player in every respect."

Johnson, director of school-age services at the Arsenal Child and Youth Services Center, has been at Pine Bluff Arsenal for four years. Before she came to PBA, she worked for the White Hall School District at the junior high computer lab.

"All I could say when I found out was 'Oh my gosh,' said Johnson. She said that she knew that Missy Brodnax, director of CYS, had nominated her. "She did such a great job writing up the nomination," she said.

She said that the thing she enjoys the most about working with children is their energy and innocence. "Everything is new," she said. "It is always busy and never dull. It is just always exciting, even when they are acting up. It is just something new to tackle."

She said that she has the opportunity to watch the children grow. "I always say when I'm in the toddler room that I'm going to get to know those kids. It is wonderful to watch."

Born and raised in White Hall, Johnson is very active in her community, especially in her church – White Hall Methodist Church. She chairs the education committee, runs the UMK (United Methodist Kids) program, teaches Bible School and is also a member of GRACE, a women's group that encourages other women to become involved.

"I went to school at Conway," said Johnson, who also worked in the health and fitness industry for many years. "I went there for five years. I had a good time and I loved it."

According to the nomination information, Johnson actively supports women's programs at PBA. "She is one of the strong women leaders of our community that has helped touch the lives of many people," read the information. "She truly loves working as the school-age director and says on a regular basis how much she loves her job. Her staff is glad she is here and would follow her anywhere. Johnson's staff knows what it is like to work for someone who truly cares about them and who treats them with respect."